

Communications capabilities at the time of the release and since then:

- At the time of the 3,000,000 gallon release, the road was destroyed and the EPA crew was trapped with no cell phone coverage (there is no cell phone coverage at the mine). The EPA crew radioed to an EPA ERRS contractor who was off-site to notify him of the situation. The contractor contacted a team from the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety (DRMS) who were off-site. EPA and DRMS personnel then communicated via radio and the OSC instructed DRMS to make notifications. (If asked: The DRMS personnel had been assisting EPA at the Gold King Mine Site and were familiar with the operations taking place during the assessment – they didn't just happen to be nearby).
- Satellite phone coverage at the mine site is very spotty and unreliable due to the east-west layout of the mountains and valleys. Iridium uses approximately 65 satellites on polar orbits, meaning they move north to south. In steep east-west valleys, this means there are periodic lapses in coverage as the satellites move overhead. (If asked why the military can communicate from a box canyon in Afghanistan, why can't EPA communicate from Colorado: civilian agencies are not allowed to use U.S. military satellites for communications purposes, and do not have the ability to move communications satellites to provide coverage in areas they are operating like the military does. Iridium is the only commercially available system, and advertises 100% global coverage. This is true, but anyone that has used the system in mountainous terrain will verify periodic lapses described above.)
- If asked: Despite the difficulties with satellite phone coverage, the mine team had a satellite phone. The day of the release, the subcontractor working with the mine team was given the satellite phone because they were conducting underground operations at the nearby Red and Bonita Mine. Due to the higher safety risk to these personnel working inside a mine, it was determined they should have custody of the satellite phone in case of emergency.
- Since the release, EPA has set up enhanced communication procedures for the mine site and the EPA Command Post located approximately 7 miles east of Silverton. EPA has staged a Communications Truck at this location which has a satellite dish and two Voice Over IP phones routed through the dish. There are VHF radios located in the Communications Truck, an 800 mega-hertz radio compatible with the State of Colorado and federally designated emergency frequencies, as well as an interoperability system to tie the radios together. This location does not have reliable cell phone coverage; however, EPA has a short range device that allows limited cellular use over the satellite system within approximately 30 feet of the Communications Truck.
- If an emergency incident occurs at the mine site, the mine team will use radios to communicate. The mine team will use EPA VHF radios which will automatically route through the 800 mega-hertz radios located in the Communications Truck. The radio

signal will route through an emergency repeater located in Silverton and will be received by the Colorado State Patrol in Montrose, Colorado. The mine team would be able to tell the State Patrol dispatchers the nature of the emergency and ask them to contact the appropriate party, who would respond accordingly. One of the VHF radios is configured to communicate with local responders and any responding medical aircraft on pre-designated channels routinely used by the State of Colorado for emergency communications (VFIRE 21, if asked). In the event that the incident is related to discharge from the mine or other water quality/river issues, staff in the Communications Truck will initiate the notification procedure established by the EPA Incident Command Post in Durango, Colorado.

- If the mine team can drive to the EPA Communications Truck/Command Post and/or communicate with the Truck via radio, then notifications can be made via cell phone or the two phones located in the Communications Truck.
- Additional information: in the days immediately following the release, EPA made inquiries whether a temporary Verizon cell phone tower could be installed, but this did not result in any action being taken. There has never been any discussion of installing a permanent cell phone tower, especially since the other measures discussed above have been implemented.